

Sunday 29th March 2026, 2.30pm – **Guest Speaker** Dr Edward Hampshire, a Historian in the MOD Naval Historical Branch speaking about *“The Royal Navy and Chatham Dockyard 1950 – 1984”*.

*In June 1981 the British government decided to close Chatham Dockyard and Naval Base, ending over four hundred years of continuous use of the site and others nearby for naval shipbuilding and refitting. This talk will set out how and why this decision was made: the context behind the infamous Nott Defence Review, how Chatham had long been the most vulnerable of the Royal Dockyards to downscaling or closure, and how labour costs and a dramatic shift in warship refitting policy played a crucial part in the story. It will also explain how the cancellation of Chatham’s last nuclear submarine refit caused a panic in Whitehall and appeared to threaten a diplomatic incident ‘that never was’. The talk will end by placing the closure in its wider policy context and touch on the fate that awaited the surviving dockyards during the 1980s: contractorization and eventual privatisation.*